

# White Paper

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**White Paper**  
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Transforming the Afro-Caribbean World

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The **Transforming the Afro-Caribbean World (TAW)** project brought together scholars of the Panama Canal, Afro-Caribbean history, and experts in the digital humanities, data modeling, and visualization for a two-day planning workshop to discuss a large-scale effort to explore Afro-Caribbean labor, migration, and the Panama Canal.

The U.S. project to construct the Panama Canal exerted a huge impact on the Americas, generating a tidal flow of migration from dozens of nations to the Panama Canal Zone in the early twentieth century—and then beyond it to sites across the hemisphere. These migrations permanently altered the geography, economy, politics, and cultures of the Western Hemisphere. More than 100,000 Afro-Caribbeans left their island homes to work on the canal; many came via official labor contracts signed with the U.S. government, but many others came on their own. The majority of migrants were male but many women came as well, often accompanied by children or in some cases giving birth while residents in the Canal Zone. Many of these workingmen, women, and children returned to their home islands after working on the canal, but others settled permanently in the Canal Zone of the Republic of Panama, and a great many migrated onward to sites across the Caribbean, Central America, and the United States.

Key questions regarding Afro-Caribbean migration and labor in the Canal Zone remain unexplored. The hardships they faced—low pay, high rates of accident and disease, discriminatory labor management policies, and constant surveillance—made it difficult for them to engage in collective bargaining or protest, two avenues that have produced rich historical records. Instead, Afro-Caribbeans frequently changed their jobs, their homes, even their names, so as to achieve a bit more freedom from the watchful eyes of U.S. Canal officials. When possible, they saved money to migrate onward to Cuba, the U.S., or other places across the Western Hemisphere. These migrations constituted the origin of the Caribbean-American community in the U.S., for example, which in turn exercised a huge impact on the political, artistic, and economic history of African Americans.

The University of Maryland's Center for the History of the New America (CHNA) began collaborating in 2012 with scholars at the Maryland Institute for Technology in the Humanities (MITH) to form the TAW working group in order to explore this migration. We wondered if digital strategies could generate more finely grained knowledge of these migrants who played such a key role in the history of the Americas and yet left behind few primary sources. The TAW project articulated several aims: 1) digitization of a subset of the proposed records to evaluate potential costs and preservation issues; 2) exploration of structured data tools to reveal new insights about these records; 3) the creation of annotated bibliographies for use by teachers and the public; and 4) identification of other archives and repositories to be included in a larger project. Ultimately the project sought to produce a work plan and report outlining a potential large-scale collaboration to map and explore the movement of Afro-Caribbean laborers between 1903 and 1920.

## First Steps

In Autumn 2014 and Spring 2015, faculty and graduate assistants located, digitized, extracted information, and transferred relevant metadata from a variety of primary sources into spreadsheets and other digital tools. This included 13 books, 2 Panama Canal Zone census reports, the first 14 volumes of *The Canal Record*, 113 memoirs from canal workers, and well over 1,000 personnel records generated and maintained by the United States Government and held at the National Personnel Records Center in St. Louis. These documents were identified through a variety of methods. Graduate Assistants searched the bibliographies of current scholarship on the Panama Canal for primary sources, as well as large online databases such as the Digital Library of the Caribbean (DLOC), the Library of Congress, National Archives, Internet Archives, and HathiTrust. The memoirs had been digitized by DLOC, and the books, census reports, and newspapers were found on the Internet Archive and HathiTrust websites. The Canal employees' personnel records were not available online; Julie Greene made two trips to the National Personnel Records Center in St. Louis, working there with a local graduate assistant she hired, and photographed the records of hundreds of individual workers.

One significant complication in this project involved the failure of negotiations with Family Search. Family Search had already scanned and digitized the main records we sought for this project: most importantly the Applications for Photo Metal Checks, held by the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA). These documents provided, in one economical page, information about canal workers' place of birth, address on the Isthmus of Panama, occupation, race, physical characteristics, family members, and literacy, and they also provided a photograph of the worker. We spent approximately six months in lengthy negotiations with Family Search, seeking to use their digitization of these documents for our project. The negotiations involved legal counsel at both the University of Maryland and at Family Search. Negotiations ultimately failed over control of intellectual property. Family Search required that they would own rights to any publications that resulted from our project, and thus would be able to provide them at no cost to their subscribers. This we certainly could not agree to.

An interesting conversation with a NARA archivist captures the difficulty involved in our being refused access to the digitization Family Search had carried out, as well as the larger worrisome implications of this for scholars more generally. While the negotiations were still ongoing, Julie Greene discussed with a NARA archivist in St. Louis—who was very kind and helpful to us throughout the project—what she should do if the project ultimately proved unable to reach agreement with Family Search. The archivist declared: “Well, those documents belong to the American people! You are the American people! You have the right to digitize them yourself, of course.” Two months later, when negotiations with Family Search had finally ended in failure, Julie Greene contacted this same archivist. Greene provided an update to the archivist, and concluded that she was now ready to digitize the documents herself as the archivist previously had suggested. The archivist said, “Let me check and get back to you.” The next day she returned to say that NARA would not allow Greene permission to digitize that record group. The archivist explained: NARA has a rule that any record group may not be scanned and digitized more than once. Since Family Search had already done so, our request was denied.

This was a major blow to our project and it has problematic implications for any scholarly projects that seek to employ the vast primary sources held at NARA. These dual policies give sole control for at least several years over huge amounts of documentation to a privately owned corporation, in effect denying access to them for the time being to scholarly groups. Assuming they later become accessible to scholars, it will still be necessary to determine if they are in a format that digital humanities scholars can use for their own purposes. For further information on these matters,

consult the following: <http://www.archives.gov/digitization/partnerships.html> and <https://www.archives.gov/digitization/principles.html>

After some searching, we managed to access the documents through a different route. However it required a much more cumbersome and time-consuming search through the entire personnel records of the Isthmian Canal Commission. To locate the one-page document we sought, Greene and her assistant had to work through personnel files each consisting of hundreds of pages. If we had been allowed to photograph files consisting only of the document we sought, the Application for Photo Metal Checks, we would have been able to digitize thousands of records in the space of a few days. Instead we had to undertake two weeklong trips to St. Louis, and this resulted in photographing records for only about 250 employees.

On the other hand, there were some unexpected benefits to examining the entire personnel records of these employees rather than relying merely on the one-page Applications for Photo Metal Checks. For example, documents in the employees' personnel records included more information about occupational history, family members, etc. These additional records were digitized as well, enhancing our knowledge about individual canal employees. As a result our project shifted in some interesting ways. Nonetheless, for us a major lesson coming out of this early stage of work on the TAW project is that the combination of Family Search's refusal to let us use its digitization, and NARA's rule that records may only be digitized once, means that an astonishing amount of documentation of American history has in effect been handed over to a private, profit-driven organization. The records that Family Search and its partner corporation Ancestry.com make available is wonderful individuals seeking information about their family history; but we as a nation will be paying a huge cost in terms of scholarly analysis, exploration, and understanding if we are not able to undertake digital humanities projects with those records.

After collecting the digital copies of all these records, Graduate Assistants organized them by document type. The personnel records were data-mined to create metadata spreadsheets of demographic data for the workers. Metadata collected and transcribed were: Photo-Metal Check numbers, occupations, wages, previous employment, citizenship, birthdate, birthplace, mailing and Isthmus address, color, marital status, literacy, sex, height and weight, physical deformities, aliases, employed relatives, dependents, and work history. This data was entered into a series of spreadsheets that were then post-processed for consistency as well as to elaborate on information that would enable different types of digitization. Visualizations were developed by Trevor Muñoz, the MITH staff, as well as Jennifer Guiliano and graduate students at the Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis. All materials were posted to the workshop project site and made available to the individuals attending the planning workshop.

### **The Workshop**

On March 26-27, 2015, Dr. Greene conducted a two-day workshop that included discussion of project goals, identification of potential international partners, archives, and repositories; an exploration of digital tools developed by Trevor Muñoz (Associate Director of MITH) and Subcontractor Jennifer Guiliano (Assistant Professor, Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis); and creation of a work plan and set of recommendations for the pilot project. The workshop was a stimulating and very productive two days. Scholars from across the U.S., the Caribbean, and South America were invited to participate based upon their knowledge of the Caribbean diaspora and/or Panamanian history. Our goal was to bring historians and literary scholars into engagement with the primary sources we had gathered as well as the digital tools

developed by MITH, and to brainstorm together about how we might structure a larger digital humanities project.

In addition to Julie Greene, Trevor Muñoz, and Jennifer Guiliano, the following scholars participated in the two-day workshop: Katarina Keane, Executive Director of the Center for the History of the New America; Aims McGuinness, Associate Professor of History at the University of Wisconsin at Milwaukee; Lara Putnam, Professor at the University of Pittsburgh; Ifeoma Kiddoe Nwankwo, Associate Professor of English at Vanderbilt University; Jorge Giovannetti, Professor of Sociology at the University of Puerto Rico; Marixa Lasso, Associate Professor of History at the University of Colombia ; Augusta Lynn Bolles, Professor of Women's Studies at the University of Maryland; Ana Patricia Rodriguez, Associate Professor of Spanish at the University of Maryland; and University of Maryland Graduate Assistants Tyler Stump and Caitlin Haynes. In addition we consulted separately with Ira Berlin, Distinguished University Professor at the University of Maryland; and with David Sartorius, Associate Professor of History at the University of Maryland.

Trevor Muñoz, on behalf of MITH, and Subcontractor Jennifer Guiliano collaborated with other members of the research team to produce samples of digital data documenting labor migration to the Panama Canal zone, and assembled and demonstrated examples of tools and methodologies for analysis of this data. Between September 2014 and February 2015, Muñoz met several times with the TAW project team to consult on representative sources, data collection and transcription methods, and possible digital methodologies to demonstrate at the project workshop. Between December 2014 and March 2015, Muñoz used MITH computing resources to prepare and process sample data for the project. Data preparation activities included conversion of PDF files acquired from open access digital libraries (e.g. HathiTrust) to formats suitable for processing with optical character recognition (OCR) software, extraction of machine readable texts, and generation of derived data such as statistical topic models of text contents. The sample data set prepared for the workshop comprised a variety of sources including approximately one hundred personal essays written by canal workers, a dozen books about the history of the canal zone, and volumes representing fourteen years' run of the local newspaper of the canal zone. MITH also created a small website ([http://umd-mith.github.io/taw\\_workshop/](http://umd-mith.github.io/taw_workshop/)) to facilitate ongoing access to data sets and demos by workshop participants. Meanwhile, subcontractor Jennifer Guiliano provided OCR for Census files, including conversion of tables to .csv or .xls formats, tested visualization software for potential use in the workshop, and conducted data cleaning and manipulation for selected software (Tableau).

The TAW workshop on March 26 and 27 involved wide-ranging conversations about the potential for deploying digital humanities tools to produce knowledge about Caribbean migrations. Topics explored included:

- \*research questions the scholars are working on that could be supported and/or enhanced through the addition of digital tools  
(for example: how to understand migration patterns not shaped by capital or empire, the need for more granular understanding of movement, how migrants used their liminal status to move between different kinds of claims to citizenship, diverse strategies of self-representation, the history of institutions seeking to track, observe, and discipline migrants and how that process shapes the archival record)
- \*the limits and built-in biases of digital sources
- \*identification of primary sources held in archives across the Americas and in Europe (especially the U.K.) that could be helpful in a digital humanities project

- \*the difficulty and expense involved in accessing primary sources which are held by archives across the U.S., Caribbean, Central America, and the United Kingdom
- \*brainstorming about the kinds of digital humanities projects that would be most exciting for the public and/or for production of scholarly knowledge
- \*the need for strategies that would allow scholars to share ideas more easily, and to connect data about people and places across diverse archives
- \* discussion of the Applications for Photo Metal Checks and the important pieces of data that should be indexed
- \*the potential for digitization to make primary sources more accessible to scholars in the Caribbean and Latin America
- \*examination of the digital tools developed by Muñoz and Guiliano.

Although workshop participants brainstormed about a wide variety of digital humanities projects that would further knowledge of Caribbean migrations to and beyond the Panama Canal Zone, one proposal received particularly strong support. Professor Lara Putnam was the first to propose that a platform or protocol allowing scholars to share primary sources, ideas, and current work in progress would be a powerful achievement because of the way it would stimulate further research in the field. This could be combined with various DH projects to analyze, visualize, etc. some parts of the shared data. Such a project could answer many of the needs workshop participants articulated: easier access to primary sources held by different archives across the Western Hemisphere and Europe; easier and more regular sharing of ideas and data; new ways to connect people and places across different archives; ability to generate more granular knowledge of migrations and migratory routes.

### **Post-Workshop Activities**

In the months after the March 2015 workshop, the TAW project focused on the following goals:

- 1) Constructing an Annotated Bibliography. Drs. Greene and Keane identified several dozen books and articles that should be included in the bibliography. Working with Grad Assistants Allison Gunn and Thomas Messersmith, they then analyzed and composed the bibliography. The bibliography is attached to this report.
- 2) Creating a visualization demonstrating some of the potential uses to which the metadata collected and digitized last year by Dr. Greene and the Graduate Assistants could be put. This demo is tightly coupled to the specific data points used and is not intended to be a re-usable tool suitable for use with different data or questions. Further work might incorporate some of the ideas explored into such a tool.
- 3) Exploring how we might structure a long-term digital humanities project on Caribbean migration, based upon the feedback received at the workshop. Developing a detailed outline for such a project and beginning to draft the final report and white paper.

Trevor Muñoz, Kate Keane, and Julie Greene met several times to discuss the activities listed above, and to assess how a larger project might be structured. There was general consensus that proposing creation of a platform for sharing research would be an excellent way to use DH strategies for enhancing and stimulating humanities knowledge of the Caribbean.

Julie Greene met with biologist and new media entrepreneur Sarah Greene to get her advice on strategies for creating such a platform for sharing research. Sarah Greene is founder and CEO of Rapid Science, a company devoted to speeding up the sharing and distribution of scientific research

by using digital strategies to encourage collaboration ([rapidscience.org](http://rapidscience.org)). She is currently developing these techniques as part of a large NIH grant on the Science of Behavior Change as well as a Mellon grant on Medical Humanities. The platform she is developing could be tweaked to make it useful for an expansion of the TAW project.

After exploring with Sarah Greene the work she is doing for the NIH and Mellon Projects, Greene reported to Muñoz and Keane and the three of them evaluated the prospects for deploying Rapid Science's strategies for a humanities project. Although S. Greene's company was developed for the medical sciences, we expect that adapting it to a project that seeks to further humanities knowledge could be very exciting. The benefits from developing a collaborative network for the sharing of primary sources, ideas, and work-in-progress, in terms of illuminating the world of the Caribbean diaspora, could be quite significant.

### **Long Term Plans and Impact**

The work in the archives by Dr. Greene and the graduate assistants, the conversations at the face-to-face workshop, and the development of the demo have yielded, as a primary outcome of the TAW project, a clear and ambitious vision for future work. We can envision an ultimate end product and discuss its structure and dependencies in ways that were not possible prior to this grant. In this vision, we imagine a web platform consisting of three sections: one for sharing digital files of primary source records; one showcasing digital projects built using digital data constructed from those primary sources (e.g. info about people or places); and one for sharing work in progress, having discussions about that work, or for making published work available to participating scholars. This whole undertaking would be led by an editorial board that could make decisions about specific projects to prioritize, uniform protocols for gathering metadata, etc. In this way, the ultimate needs of the scholarly sub-community researching Caribbean migration would be best served by combining functions of a (sub)disciplinary research data repository with working groups to develop authority control, linked data vocabularies, extracted text features (such as those published by HathiTrust) and perhaps other derivative data sets. These shared activities could develop a user and contributor community for transcription and annotation projects as well as other kinds of digital humanities projects—involving visualization, mapping, etc.

All together these collaborations would have the potential to test existing ideas and generate new analyses regarding Caribbean migration, agency, and identity. It would make possible, for example, a far more detailed and precise understanding of Caribbean migrations across the Western Hemisphere. This project would be multi-lingual and multi-archival, involving primary sources from a variety of nations. A major benefit of such a project would be to ultimately make primary sources available to people in disparate parts of the Western Hemisphere; e.g. Panamanians who are not able easily to make a research trip to NARA in College Park would benefit from these sources being made available online.

There would be several challenges to such a project. Researchers sharing primary sources would tend to have photographed some portion of an archive, not an entire collection; so the platform would need to include ways to clarify such matters and adjust for differences and limitations as to what has been collected. We would need to determine if library/archive would need to give permission for distribution of copies of documents, and if so, ascertain whether they would give permission. We would need to borrow/develop a system for micro-citations. However we are confident that such challenges could be managed and overcome through sustained, long-term collaboration.



Our team is in the process of investigating possible grants that would support an expansion of the current project, as well as considering further the challenges involved and discussing with Sarah Greene the possibility of involving her Rapid Science group in building the platform for this project.

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### **Transforming the Afro-Caribbean World Annotated Bibliography**

**Abbot, Willis J. *Panama and the Canal in Picture and Prose*. New York: Pub. in English and Spanish by Syndicate Pub. Co., 1913.**

This 1913 publication provides insight into the period's understanding of Panama, its culture, and its history through the rose-colored glasses of American expansionism. The book also contains stunning photos, maps, and illustrations. While scholarly works have long surpassed the information contained in Abbot's book, there is tremendous value to the study of the Canal utilizing this work as a primary source.

**Anguizola, Gustave. "Negroes in the Building of the Panama Canal." *Phylon* (1960-) 29, no. 4 (1968): 351-359.**

Anguizola's essay explores the social, cultural, and political struggles of blacks in the building of the Panama Canal and in the years after. The author presents an important timeline for these events leading up to what Anguizola perceives as ultimate success in the acquisition of political rights and prominence. This work is important to the field because of that established timeline as well as for the rich collection of primary sources utilized for the creation of the piece.

**Avery, Ralph Emmett, and William C. Haskins. *The Greatest Engineering Feat in the World at Panama: Authentic and Complete Story of the Building and Operation of the Great Waterway—The Eighth Wonder of the World*. New York: Leslie-Judge Co, 1915.**

Writing from the perspective of those who observed the construction of the Panama Canal, Avery and Haskins describe the popular history of the Canal from European exploration of the area culminating in America's successful opening of the Canal to traffic in 1914. The publishers heavily marketed the book's historical importance claiming that it documents the grandeur and achievement the Canal represents. For this reason, the work functions as a time capsule for contemporary thoughts on American triumph over nature and nations as well as the hope that the Canal represented to many Westerners. The work also includes a large number of photographs and illustrations.

**Bennett, Ira E. *History of the Panama Canal: Its Construction and Builders*. Builders' ed. Washington, DC: Historical Pub. Co., 1915.**

Bennett's work on the Canal is a contemporary piece that utilized the sources as they became available. As is standard for the era, the book is framed as a testament to man's engineering capabilities and American triumph. The author describes those who died during construction as if they were martyrs for the cause of humankind's advancement.

**Biesanz, John, and Luke M. Smith. "Race Relations in Panama and the Canal Zone." *American Journal of Sociology* 57, no. 1 (1951): 7-14.**

The authors of this important text examined race relations via the gold and silver systems that were in place during the period in which they wrote the article. American workers were paid in gold while West Indians were paid in silver. This monetary discrepancy served as a physical tool for demonstrating the very real social disparity between these two sets of workers. Biesanz and Smith established that a caste system based on race mirrored the gold and silver system.

**Bolles, A. Lynn. *We Paid Our Dues: Women Trade Union Leaders of the Caribbean*. Washington, D.C.: Howard University Press, 1996.**

In Bolles' work, we find the stories of twenty-four female trade union leaders in the Caribbean. Through interviews with these women, Bolles has constructed a narrative that questions the place of women in the trade unions and the practices of those trade unions themselves. Bolles argues that while women, in fact, had a large hand in the leadership of Caribbean trade unions, their formal presence has been largely ignored or obscured in favor of men. By conducting these interviews and highlighting the stories of these "invisible" women, Bolles hopes to reframe the discussion around women's political participation in the Caribbean and demonstrate the centrality of women to Caribbean life.

**Browne, Edith A. *Panama*. London: A. and C. Black, 1923.**

Written soon after the Panama Canal's opening, Browne's book investigates contemporary popular beliefs regarding the Canal and reports on its operations. For the era, Browne's work is unusually introspective regarding American perceptions. The author provides extensive descriptions of Panama's geography and the Canal's function. She wrote the book in the style of a travel journal, thereby making the work experiential for the reader. It is important because of that first person perspective. The book also features beautiful--albeit idealized--water colors of Panamanian history.

**Bryce-Laporte, R.S. "Crisis, Contraculture, and Religion among West Indians in the Panama Canal Zone." In *Blackness in Latin America and the Caribbean: Social Dynamics and Cultural Transformations*, edited by Norman E. Whitten, Jr. and Arlene Torres, 100-118. Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 1998.**

Bryce-Laporte's article serves as an essential text for the field as it explores a specific case of murder and occultism to project larger conclusions regarding religion, class, and society in the Canal Zone. The author utilizes anthropological tools to reach important conclusions relating to a Panamanian caste system as well as folk religion. Bryce-Laporte demonstrates that minorities in a given society will develop a bicultural identity, absorbing the culture of the dominant society in addition to their own. However, that same minority population will still view the culture of the dominant society as foreign in contrast to their original culture. In such an atmosphere, it is not uncommon for the minority culture to develop a "contra-cultural system" which runs often counter to the values and practices of the majority culture that is being outwardly observed.

**Bullard, Arthur. *Panama: The Canal, the Country and the People by Albert Edwards*. New York, 1912.**

Published before the Canal's opening, Bullard's work offers readers a different perspective than many pieces listed here. The work represents several critical moments in American perceptions of the period. The journalistic, descriptive style in which Bullard wrote the book denotes the exploratory attitude of Americans towards what they considered to be exotic locations. All of these descriptions are geared towards an audience that has only a vague conception of Panama and the future Canal. As such, it is extremely illustrative in its locution, period photographs, and maps.

**Calvo, Alfredo Castellero, ed. *Historia General de Panama*, 3 vols. Panama City: Comité Nacional del Centenario de la República de Panamá, 2004.**

*Historia General de Panama* is a tour de force and essential to the field. Consisting of three sizable volumes, the work spans Panama's history from the pre-Columbian era to the twentieth century. Myriad scholars contribute to the books on topics ranging from slave trade in the region to religion to politics. The work is unparalleled in its comprehensive nature. Furthermore, the contributing authors advance the field by questioning prior historiography, building a new paradigm on top of previous scholarship that exalted imperialist narratives over those of the individual. The volumes are also valuable for their resources. On top of a solid bibliography, illustrations and photographs as well as a series of maps assist the reader in exploring Panamanian history at length.

**Chatfield, Mary A. *Light on Dark Places at Panama*. New York: Broadway, 1908.**

Chatfield's work grants an invaluable perspective to the study of the Panama Canal. This book is a compilation of Chatfield's letters written over a sixteen-month trip through Panama, California, and Costa Rica to the members of a literary club to which she belonged. Subsequently, the book gives insight into a Victorian woman's notions of Panama. Chatfield's collection also includes correspondence from numerous other sources as well as tangible reminders of the past such as menus.

**Chomsky, Aviva. *West Indian Workers and the United Fruit Company in Costa Rica, 1870-1940*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1996.**

Chomsky's work on West Indian workers in Costa Rica offers a solid labor history and utilizes a "bottom up" approach. In doing so, Chomsky effectively explores the daily life of these workers. Her work is especially useful as she examines the United Fruit Company's treatment of illness and disease among the worker population. The author also provides an excellent bibliography with a thorough review of previous historiography relating to Costa Rican workers, plantations, and the United Fruit Company.

**Conniff, Michael L. *Black Labor on a White Canal: Panama, 1904-1981*. Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1985.**

Conniff contributes an important piece to the historiography with his work on black West Indian workers. Examining both the ever-present racism in Canal Zone culture as well as labor practices, Conniff gives readers yet another glimpse into the experience of the West Indians through a different lens. One of the most beneficial contributions of this book is that Conniff highlights the activities of specific labor unions, such as the AFL-CIO, in the construction and maintenance of the Canal.

**Cramer, Louise. "Songs of West Indian Negroes in the Canal Zone." *California Folklore Quarterly* 5, no. 3 (July 1946): 243-272.**

Cramer's work illuminates the language and culture of the English-speaking West Indian blacks through music. She examines the folk culture through four different categories: work songs, banta songs, game songs, and social songs. This article is essential to the field as Cramer deals with an overlooked population through the lens of their vibrant, fusion culture. Additionally, Cramer listed a variety of songs lyrics in their entirety for historians to examine.

**Donoghue, Michael E. *Borderline on the Isthmus: Race, Culture, and the Struggle for the Canal Zone*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2014.**

Donoghue's work, the first of its kind, includes gender history alongside race and national identity in the examination of the Canal Zone's residents. Of particular note, Donoghue sheds light on crime, conflicts with the American military, and the development of an active sex industry. The author argues that these social pressures ultimately lead to the United States' withdrawal from the area. Donoghue's original approach to the era in conjunction with his varied use of original sources such as oral histories make this work an important addition to the study of the Canal.

**Ewing, Adam. *The Age of Garvey: How a Jamaican Activist Created a Mass Movement and Changed Global Black Politics*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014.**

Ewing's book examines the rise and fall of Marcus Mosiah Garvey, a prominent Jamaican activist who led a movement that hoped to assert black rights on a global scale during the early half of the Twentieth century. Despite the ultimate failure of the movement, its ideology abounded and contributed to dialogues within the African diaspora. Many other studies of Garveyism have been conducted; Ewing's is distinctive in its global framework. Ewing explores "Garveyism" as a manifestation of black aspirations and political assertion throughout the diaspora. This is especially useful to the field when considering Garvey ideology applied to the Canal Zone and its West Indian community.

**Franck, Harry Alverson. *Zone Policeman 88: A Close Range Study of the Panama Canal and Its Workers*. New York: Arno Press, 1970.**

Franck wrote this travel journal as part of his stay in Panama as a census taker and, later, as a policeman. Because of his specific role in the Canal Zone, Franck's work reflects certain alliances and interests. His preoccupation with human life takes precedence over scenery, giving life to abstract figures with his extensive descriptions. Additionally, his work in the Canal naturally puts him into an alliance with the United States military presence. Because of this, Franck affords an overly optimistic, classist, and white perspective of life in the Canal Zone. It is

nonetheless one of the most valuable first person accounts of life in the Zone during the construction era.

**Frederick, Rhonda D. *Colón Man a Come! Mythographies of Panama Canal Migration*. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2005.**

Frederick illuminates a literary figure often ignored by scholarship. Using folk narratives, such as songs and stories, the author explores the use of the Colón Man in the Canal community. In so doing, Frederick exposes otherwise unknown migrant stories as well as the oral traditions of Canal workers. While she utilizes historical modes of inquiry, Frederick also implements literary criticism in her analysis, offering readers a unique avenue into the study of a little known aspect of Canal society.

**Gandásegui, Marco A. *Las Clases Sociales En Panamá: Grupos Humanos, Clases Medias, Elites Y Oligarquía*. First Edition. Panamá: CELA, 1993.**

This compilation of essays invites readers to examine Canal culture through a social lens. The essays are written from a Marxist perspective, and issues of class and economics are predominant throughout the essays. The range of authorship as well as the Marxist analysis of the period grant readers a unique insight when evaluating the field.

**Gmelch, George. *Double Passage: The Lives of Caribbean Migrants Abroad and Back Home*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 1992.**

Gmelch's book offers much needed insight to an often-diminished area of the field by using thirteen accounts from Barbadian Canal workers. The author incorporates not just their experiences within the Zone, but also their return to Barbados. Thus, his treatment covers a wide range of topics from racism and classism within the Zone to reintegration back into Barbadian society upon return. The work illuminates of the Barbadian experience and represents the full circle of immigration to and from the Canal Zone.

**Greene, Julie. *The Canal Builders: Making America's Empire at the Panama Canal*. New York: Penguin, 2009.**

Julie Greene's book on the Panama Canal looks beyond the construction and significance of the Canal itself to explore the individual histories of the workingmen and women who built it. The book emphasizes the global migration of workers to the Canal for employment, the canal officials' reliance on racial segregation for controlling the workforce, and the resulting racial, ethnic, and gender relations that shaped work and life in the Canal Zone. Greene utilized personal papers of workers as well as federal documents to illuminate these workers' lives, thus contributing a needed analysis of the human experience during the Canal's construction.

**Harpelle, Ronald N. *The West Indians of Costa Rica: Race, Class, and the Integration of an Ethnic Minority*. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2001.**

The author examines West Indians in Limón, Costa Rica with a particular focus on the rise and fall of the community. Harpelle investigates the critical role the United Fruit Company played in the stability of West Indian life, indicating that its failures caused mass migration to Costa Rica. Furthermore, Harpelle evaluates Costa Rican racism towards these migrants and the pressures applied on the community to assimilate into the broader culture. The author also pulls from period press and consular reports to bring to light data previously ignored.

**Haskin, Frederic J. *The Panama Canal*. Garden City, NY: Doubleday, Page & Co., 1914.**

Haskin's work, completed as the Canal itself neared full completion, is a classic history of the construction of the Canal. Interestingly, Haskin received input on the manuscript from Chief Engineer George Washington Goethals. That combined with the ample photographs and the distance of the history to the events almost make it as much of a primary source as it is a secondary source when discussing the impact of the canal on US society and culture.

**Hogan, J. Michael. *The Panama Canal in American Politics: Domestic Advocacy and the Evolution of Policy*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1986.**

Hogan delves into American political perceptions and persuasions about the Canal's significance, giving scholars a comprehensive overview of its complex role in American national identity. In particular, the author explores the Canal context in debates between the political poles, arguing that the Right views the Canal as the manifestation of American core values such as ingenuity and ambition whereas the Left considered it as another shameful moment of American imperialism. Hogan's text is an important contribution as it thoroughly examines the American political atmosphere and its relation to the Canal during the latter years of the nation's control over the Zone.

**James, Winston. *Holding Aloft the Banner of Ethiopia: Caribbean Radicalism in Early Twentieth-Century America*. London: Verso, 1999.**

Winston James' work explores the role of black nationalistic political radicalism in the Caribbean migrant population in the United States during the first decades of the twentieth century. James also incorporates Anglophone Afro-Caribbean narratives alongside Hispanic Afro-Caribbean ones in an attempt to better illuminate the radical movements in which they participated as well as their complex relationship with one another. In doing so, the author gifts readers with a rich study in order to better understand both the African diaspora and the Caribbean world. Furthermore, he provides researchers with a substantial overview of the historiography, statistics, and analysis of a wide array of primary sources.

**Lasso, Marixa. *Mythos of Harmony: Race and Republicanism during the Age of Revolution, Colombia 1795-1831*. Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2007.**

In this intriguing monograph, Marixa Lasso re-examines the influence of the Age of Revolutions on the ideals of racial equality. She argues that, while racism never truly went away during this time, it was the Caribbean revolutions and their successful placement of blacks in prominent positions of power that gave the later colonial periods the necessary framework to envision a society in which racial hierarchies did not exist. Lasso's work is an attempt to re-frame the

historical discussion around a better understanding of interactions between elite thinkers and people on the ground, demonstrating that it was as much the popular politics of the revolutions as it was the intellectuals in the later colonial period that led the charge of republicanism in the Caribbean.

**Lewis, Lancelot S. *The West Indian in Panama: Black Labor in Panama, 1850-1914*. Washington, DC: University Press of America, 1980.**

Lewis attempts to correct the omission of the role of the West Indian in the historiography of Panama by examining and complicating the experience of the non-white peoples in the region. The monograph begins with an introduction that gives an overview of the history of slavery and the African diaspora in Panama and then launches into a discussion about the precarious position of the second-wave of black immigrants to the region in the mid-to-late nineteenth century, arguing that they did not assimilate as completely as their predecessors. Of particular interest is the appendix, which contains many letters and other primary sources from the Canal Zone.

**Mack, Gerstle. *The Land Divided: A History of the Panama Canal and Other Isthmian Canal Projects*. New York: Knopf, 1944.**

This foundational text is a top-down political history of the Canal region. The monograph begins with the European discovery of the area and ends with the American governance of the completed Canal. It is separated into four parts, each detailing a different “era” of the region: the Spanish Era, the Battle of the Routes, the French Era, and the American Era. While it overlooks some of the more social and cultural aspects of the workers involved in the canal, it is nonetheless an indispensable look at the history of the whole region.

**Major, John. *Prize Possession: The United States and the Panama Canal, 1903-1979*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993.**

Major’s work is a balanced diplomatic history of the United States’ interests in the Panama Canal. Tracing the specific policies of the United States, comparing them with those of the British in the Suez, and contrasting them with the interests of the other state actors in the region, Major attempts to demonstrate the reasons behind the United States’ continued involvement in the region. Ultimately, Major traces a thread of continuity between the nineteenth century and the twentieth, arguing that it was this thread that shaped the US policy up to 1979 and beyond.

**McCullough, David. *The Path Between the Seas: The Creation of the Panama Canal, 1870-1914*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1977.**

This book examines the history of the Panama Canal’s construction, including the French as well as the U.S. projects. With its stirring narrative, McCullough’s work appeals to academic and popular audiences. It draws heavily from primary sources to vividly evoke the period, with an emphasis on the engineering feat the canal represented as well as the human drama. Its emphasis is on the officials who designed and oversaw the construction project, but along the way it also provides some information about daily life and labor in the Canal Zone.

**McGuinness, Aims. *Path of Empire: Panama and the California Gold Rush*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2008.**

McGuinness' monograph takes a unique approach to the histories of both Panama and the California Gold Rush, showing the transnational linkages between the two and establishing a connection between the famous event (often told only from the perspective of the United States) and the later political, cultural, and social developments in Panama. McGuinness utilizes previously unknown sources found as unbound "leaves" within Panama's archive to give both a more complete view of the history and to provide a metaphor for the transnational movements of people and goods in Panama's history. He also provides a theoretical framework for the importance of looking beyond a purely national model of historical writing.

**Milian, Claudia, and Ifeoma Kiddoe Nwankwo. "Introduction: Interoceanic Diasporas and The Panama Canal's Centennial." *The Global South* 6, no. 2 (Fall 2012): 1-14.**

This article, an introduction to a special issue of the journal *The Global South* dedicated to the centennial of the Panama Canal, traces the current trends in the historiography of the Panama Canal as well as offers suggestions as to the future of this historiography. It focuses mainly on the new perspective present in the historiography that focuses on a "bottom up" view of history rather than "top down."

**Missal, Alexander. *Seaway to the Future: American Social Visions and the Construction of the Panama Canal*. Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 2008.**

Missal's work examines the effect of the Panama Canal as a discourse within American society, ultimately arguing that perceptions of the Canal and the images of it as presented by authors, artists, and other cultural interpreters were just as important as (if not more important than) the Canal itself and its political or diplomatic implications. While Missal's view is focused mainly upon the "domestic" U.S. view of the Canal, it nonetheless presents an important narrative that takes in the larger view of the Canal and the link between culture and imperialism.

**Momsen, Janet H., ed. *Women & Change in the Caribbean: A Pan-Caribbean Perspective*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1993.**

In this edited collection, Momsen is joined by nineteen other historians as they work to reframe the history of women in the Caribbean. The authors seek to problematize the dichotomous narrative of women in the public sphere and women in the private sphere, arguing that the two were intimately related in the Caribbean. The first section of the collection focuses on this public/private relationship while the second section, following this theme, attempts to integrate economic history to the history of Caribbean women.

**Navas, Luis. *El Movimiento obrero en Panamá, 1880-1914*. San José, Costa Rica: Universitaria Centroamericana, 1979.**

This study examines the Panamanian labor movement during a key period that stretched from the French canal building effort to the U.S. project beginning in 1904, and onward to completion of the canal in 1914. Its emphasis is on canal and railroad workers and it is based primarily on secondary sources.



**Newton, Velma. *The Silver Men: West Indian Labour Migration to Panama, 1850-1914*. Mona, Jamaica: University of the West Indies, 1984.**

This path-breaking monograph explores the lives of West Indian laborers in the Panama Canal and the impact of their immigration not only on the Canal's construction but also on the localities from which they emigrated. Newton utilizes primary sources and an array of statistical analyses to piece together the lives of the so-called "silver men" in the Canal Zone. In so doing, Newton demonstrates the importance of the West Indians to the construction of the Canal and the social and racial disparities inherent in their management.

**Nwankwo, Ifeoma Kiddoe. *Black Cosmopolitanism: Racial Consciousness and Transnational Identity in the Nineteenth-Century Americas*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005.**

This monograph presents a deep analysis of the constructions of identity within the African-American diaspora, using the writings of authors such as Frederick Douglass and Cuban Poet, Plácido (Gabriel de la Concepción Valdés) to examine the ways in which "blackness" was understood by competing ethnic and diasporic groups in the Americas during the nineteenth century. Nwankwo's story begins with the Haitian Revolution, underscoring the necessity of understanding this event to understanding the writings of black authors at this time. *Black Cosmopolitanism* is a complex transnational intellectual history that is necessary to understanding what "blackness" meant and how competing cultural discourses came to shape it in the nineteenth century.

**O'Reggio, Trevor. *Between Alienation and Citizenship: The Evolution of Black West Indian Society in Panama, 1914-1964*. Washington, DC: University Press of America, 2006.**

Exploring the complex race relations in Panama between 1914 and 1964, O'Reggio's work argues that the imposition of the United States in Panamanian society artificially skewed the natural development of racial structures and relations in Panama. Both Panamanian society and the United States at the time had conflicting (though ultimately both oppressing) views of racial structures, and the sudden influx of Americans and black West Indians, O'Reggio argues, led to a new form of segregation and discrimination than had previously existed in Panama. O'Reggio's work is one of the few to analyze competing racial structures in the region.

**Parker, Elizabeth Kittredge. *Panama Canal Bride: A Story of Construction Days*. New York: Exposition, 1955.**

This memoir describes the life of the author, Elizabeth Kittredge Parker, who was a so-called "canal bride." It goes through her experiences at the Canal during its construction, describing the realities of every-day life in the remote region and the differences between the cultures and married lives in the Canal and the America that many workers had left behind. Though published much later than the events described, this is nonetheless an important primary source for understanding the lives of Canal workers and their families.

**Petras, Elizabeth McLean. *Jamaican Labor Migration: White Capital and Black Labor, 1850-1930*. Boulder, CO: Westview, 1988.**

Petras' monograph gives an account of Jamaican workers in Panama and the economic and social relations that created a large emigration from and later immigration to Jamaica. Petras explores the relationship between the newly-developing class structures in the region after the abolition of slavery, taking a Marxist analysis of the incomplete proletarianization of the working classes at the time.

**Plaza, Dwaine, and Frances Henry. *Returning to the Source: The Final Stage of the Caribbean Migration Circuit*. Trinidad and Tobago: University of the West Indies Press, 2006.**

This edited work details the return migration of workers back to the Caribbean. The piece contains essays from respected historians ranging from broad historical overviews to micro histories examining migrant returns to individual communities. The essays do much to illuminate the personal, financial, and cultural difficulties that awaited migrants once they returned to their native lands. Subsequently, this book is advantageous to the reader because of its perspective on an aspect of West Indian migration that is infrequently examined.

**Potter, Robert B., Dennis Conway, and Joan Phillips, eds. *The Experience of Return Migration: Caribbean Perspectives*. Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2005.**

This collection, edited by Robert B. Potter, Dennis Conway, and Joan Phillips, probes an often-overlooked aspect of immigration in the Caribbean — return migration. The authors pay particular attention to the aspects which drive return migration, both as “push” forces from their second country and “pull” forces from the country to which they are returning. The essays effectively integrate gender and transnational history into national stories.

**Putnam, Lara. *The Company They Kept: Migrants and the Politics of Gender in Caribbean Costa Rica, 1870-1960*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002.**

Seeking to lend a voice to an often-overlooked segment of the migrant community in the Caribbean, Putnam does an excellent job illuminating the role of women and gender roles in the history of migration. Putnam's work is unique in this regard, as it is able to link gender history and the history of race together with economic, social, cultural, and political history to highlight the ways in which gender norms both shaped and were shaped by these other intersectional facets of society.

———. ***Radical Moves: Caribbean Migrants and the Politics of Race in the Jazz Age*. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2013.**

Putnam's work, following her previous contributions regarding the need for a bottom-up view of Caribbean history, examines the growing consciousness of black internationalism rising out of migrants from the West Indies from the beginning of the twentieth century to 1940. While Putnam does not completely do away with the influence of figures such as Marcus Garvey in this history, her focus on the spread of race-consciousness through the subalterns of the movement helps to provide a more complete understanding of the power of networks in the construction of both ideas in the case of black internationalism and culture in the case of jazz and “reggae” dance.

**Reyes Rivas, Eyra. *El Trabajo de las mujeres en la historia de la construccion del Canal de Panama, 1881-1914*. Panamá: Universidad de Panamá, Instituto de la Mujer, 2000.**

This brief monograph examines the role of diverse women during the French and U.S. construction efforts. The author considers French, U.S., Caribbean, and Spanish women, with an emphasis on their labor. She argues the “frontier zone” during the construction projects allowed women a certain degree of freedom and independence.

**Richard, Alfred Charles, Jr. *The Panama Canal in American National Consciousness, 1870-1990*. New York: Garland, 1990.**

This monograph examines the unique relationship between the United States and the Panama canal with a particular emphasis on the popular reaction and feelings of pride coming from the U.S. First published in 1969 and then reissued with a new introduction after the U.S. invasion in 1989, Richard’s work uses archival and published sources to show how the idea and construction of the canal shaped the popular consciousness of the United States over more than a century.

**Richardson, Bonham. *Panama Money in Barbados, 1900-1920*. Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1985.**

Bonham’s work explores the effects of the emigration from Barbados due to the shifting labor markets on the local social and cultural structure. Bonham argues that the exodus of Barbadian men in search of their higher wage had permanent effects on the structure of the plantation economy of Barbados and the structures of the sugar industry. Furthermore, the influx of so-called “Panama Money” earned by working at the canal shifted the traditional social structures of Barbados leading to a significant degree of economic independence.

**Roberts, G.W. “Emigration from the Island of Barbados.” *Social and Economic Studies* 4, no. 3 (September 1955): 245-288.**

This article explores the emigration from Barbados in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. It uses this period of emigration as a case study to explore not only the causes of such emigration but also the economic and social effects that persist due to this. In addition to its theoretical applications, it provides an account of an often-overlooked aspect of West Indies immigration.

**Rodríguez, Ana Patricia. *Dividing the Isthmus: Central American Transnational Histories, Literatures, and Cultures*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2009.**

Rodríguez analyzes Central American literature and history in this important work. Through her illumination of regional fiction, the author illustrates the themes and figures within such literature that transcend political borders. Instead of viewing literature and national politics as two distinct entities, Rodríguez argues that they are intimately connected and complex. Her work is a valuable addition to the field as it approaches Central American history in a manner previously left unexplored.

**Senior, Olive. *Dying to Better Themselves: West Indians and the Building of the Panama Canal*. Kingston, Jamaica: The University of the West Indies Press, 2014.**

Senior's work explores the construction of the Panama Canal through the eyes of the West Indian workers who physically built it. The author specifically focuses on Jamaican immigrants to the Canal Zone as this is where she is from and also where she gathered the majority of her interviews. Nevertheless, Senior incorporates oral histories from across the West Indian immigrant community. Her reliance on oral testimonies and personal histories conveys an intimate vision of life, culture, and the lasting effects of the intersection of West Indian immigrants and the Panama Canal.

**Serra, Yolanda Marco. *Los obreros españoles en la construcción del Canal de Panamá: La emigración española hacia Panamá vista a través de la prensa española*. Panama: Portobelo, 1997.**

This brief book is one of the few historical works exploring the lives and labor of the thousands of Spaniards who migrated to work on the construction of the Panama Canal. The author relies primarily on the Spanish press to depict the reasons for emigrating, the working conditions, food and housing, and the causes of the considerable protests that erupted among Spanish workers.

**Shepherd, Verene, Bridget Brereton, and Barbara Bailey, eds. *Engendering History: Caribbean Women in Historical Perspective*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1995.**

This edited collection brings together works intended to integrate gender and women's history into the social and cultural narratives of Caribbean history. Works range in temporal scope from the eighteenth to mid-twentieth centuries. The collection, which has been compiled from selections of papers presented at a symposium held at the University of the West Indies, Mona, takes both a theoretical and methodological approach to the utilization of gender in both the particular context of Caribbean history and to gender studies as a whole.

**Van Hardeveld, Rose Mahr. *Make the Dirt Fly!* Hollywood, CA: Pan Press, 1956.**

Recalling their experiences in the Canal Zone, Rose Mahr van Hardeveld creates an interesting and important memoir which helps us understand not only the every-day life of European and American immigrants to the canal zone, but also their interactions with the black workers with whom they were constantly interacting. This primary source paints an interweaving picture of patriotism, hardship, and racial tensions throughout the period of construction. As such, it should be utilized to the fullest extent by anyone examining the deeper cultural understanding of the Panama Canal in the American psyche abroad and to the people who helped to bring it about.

**Westerman, George W. *The West Indian Worker on the Canal Zone*. N.p.: N.p., 1951.**

This short book is one of the first designed to take the contributions of the West Indian workers to the construction of the Panama Canal seriously. Westerman not only details the sheer scale of participation of the West Indian workers, but also chronicles the daily experiences of the workers. While this work could have been expanded, it nonetheless provided the seed for several important works on the history of the construction of the canal.

